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**CHRISTMAS
PRESENTS**

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You will make no mistake if
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**Amelia
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THE AMELIA

ARE ALSO PUT UP IN

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TWENTY-FIVE IN A BOX

These boxes are especial-
ly attractive and will be
useful after the cigars are
gone

Leave Your Christmas Order
Early With

PHILIP WETZEL

Perrysburg

Uncle Scrooge had imperceptibly be-
come so gay and light of heart that he
would have pledged the unconscious
company in return and thanked them;
in an inaudible speech if the ghost had
given him time. But the whole scene
passed off in the breath of the last
word spoken by his nephew, and he
and the spirit were again upon their
travels.

Much they saw, and far they went,
and many homes they visited, but al-
ways with a happy end. The spirit
stood beside sickbeds, and they were
cheerful; on foreign lands, and they
were close at home; by struggling men,
and they were patient in their greater
hope; by poverty, and it was rich. In
almshouse, hospital and jail, in mis-
ery's every refuge, where vain man in
his little brief authority had not made
fast the door and barred the spirit out,
he left his blessing and taught Scrooge
his precepts.

It was a long night if it were only
a night, but Scrooge had his doubts of
this, because the Christmas holidays
appeared to be condensed into the
space of time they passed together. It
was strange, too, that while Scrooge
remained unaltered in his outward
form the ghost grew older, clearly old-
er. Scrooge had observed this change,
but never spoke of it until they left a
children's Twelfth Night party, when,
looking at the spirit as they stood to-
gether in an open place, he noticed that
its hair was gray.

"Are spirits' lives so short?" asked
Scrooge.

"My life upon this globe is very
brief," replied the ghost. "It ends to-
night."

"Tonight!" cried Scrooge.

"Tonight at midnight. Hark! The
time is drawing near."

The bell struck 12.

Scrooge looked about him for the
ghost and saw it not. As the last
stroke ceased to vibrate he remember-
ed the prediction of old Jacob Marley
and, lifting up his eyes, beheld a solemn
phantom, draped and hooded, coming
like a mist along the ground toward
him.



Chapter Four

THE LAST OF THE SPIRITS.

THE phantom slowly,
gravely, silently
approached. When
it came near him
Scrooge bent down
upon his knee, for
in the very air
through which this
spirit moved it seemed to scatter gloom
and mystery.

It was shrouded in a deep black gar-
ment, which concealed its head, its
face, its form, and left nothing of it
visible save one outstretched hand.
But for this it would have been diffi-
cult to detach its figure from the night
and separate it from the darkness by
which it was surrounded.

He felt that it was tall and stately
when it came beside him and that its
mysterious presence filled him with a
solemn dread. He knew no more, for
the spirit neither spoke nor moved.

"I am in the presence of the Ghost of
Christmas Yet to Come?" said Scrooge.

The spirit answered not, but pointed
downward with its hand.

"You are about to show me shadows
of the things that have not happened,
but will happen in the time before us,"
Scrooge pursued. "Is that so, spirit?"

The upper portion of the garment
was contracted for an instant in its
folds, as if the spirit had inclined its
head. That was the only answer he
received.

Although well used to ghostly compa-
ny by this time, Scrooge feared the
silent shape so much that his legs
trembled beneath him, and he found
that he could hardly stand when he
prepared to follow it. The spirit
paused a moment, as observing his
condition and giving him time to re-
cover.

But Scrooge was all the worse for
this. It thrilled him with a vague,
uncertain horror to know that behind
the dusky shroud there were ghostly
eyes intently fixed upon him, while he,
though he stretched his own to the ut-
most, could see nothing but a spectral
hand and one great heap of black.

"Ghost of the Future," he exclaimed,
"I fear you more than any specter I
have seen. But, as I know your pur-
pose is to do me good and as I hope
to be another man from what I was, I
am prepared to bear you company and
do it with a thankful heart. Will you
not speak to me?"

It gave him no reply. The hand was
pointed straight before them.

"Lead on," said Scrooge, "lead on."
The night is waning fast, and it is pre-
cious time to me, I know. Lead on,
spirit."

The phantom moved away as it had
come toward him. Scrooge followed in
the shadow of its dress, which bore him
up, he thought, and carried him along.

They scarcely seemed to enter the
city, for the city rather seemed to
spring up about them and encompass
them of its own act. But there they
were in the heart of it, on "change,"
among the merchants, who hurried
up and down and chinked the money
in their pockets, and conversed in
groups, and looked at their watches,
and trifled thoughtfully with their
great gold seals, and so forth, as
Scrooge had seen them often.

The spirit stopped beside one little

knot of business men. Observing that
one hand was pointed to them, Scrooge
advanced to listen to their talk.

"No," said a great fat man with a
monstrous chin, "I don't know much
about it either way. I only know he's
dead."

"When did he die?" inquired ano-
ther.

"Last night, I believe."

"Why, what was the matter with
him?" asked a third, taking a vast
quantity of snuff out of a very large
snuffbox. "I thought he'd never die."

"God knows," said the first, with a
yawn.

"What has he done with his money?"
asked a red faced gentleman with a
pendulous excrescence on the end of his
nose that shook like the gills of a tur-
key cock.

"I haven't heard," said the man with
the large chin, yawning again. "Left
it to his company, perhaps. He hasn't
left it to me. That's all I know."

This pleasantry was received with a
general laugh.

"It's likely to be a very cheap fune-
ral," said the same speaker, "for upon
my life I don't know of anybody to go
to it. Suppose we make up a party
and volunteer."

"I don't mind going if a lunch is
provided," observed the gentleman
with the excrescence on his nose. "But
I must be fed, if I make one."

Another laughed.

"Well, I am the most disinterested
among you, after all," said the first
speaker, "for I never wear black
gloves, and I never eat lunch. But I'll
offer to go if anybody else will. When
I come to think of it, I'm not at all
sure that I wasn't his most particular
friend, for we used to stop and speak
whenever we met. By, by!"

"Spirit," said Scrooge, shuddering
from head to foot, "I see, I see. The
case of this un-
happy man might
be my own. My
life tends that
way now. Merciful
heaven, what
is this?"

He recoiled in
terror, for the
scene had chang-
ed, and now he
almost touched a
bed, a bare, un-
curtained bed, on
which, beneath a
ragged sheet, "MERCIFUL HEAVEN,
there lay a some-
thing covered up, which, though it was
dumb, announced itself in awful lan-
guage."

The room was very dark, too dark to
be observed with any accuracy, though
Scrooge glanced round it in obedience
to a secret impulse, anxious to know
what kind of room it was. A pale
light, rising in the outer air, fell
straight upon the bed, and on it, un-
watched, unwept, uncared for, was the
body of this man.

He lay in the dark, empty house with
not a man, a woman or a child to say
he was kind to me in this or that and
for the memory of one kind word I will
be kind to him. A cat was tearing at
the door, and there was a sound of
gnawing rats beneath the hearthstone.
What they wanted in the room of
death and why they were so restless
and disturbed Scrooge did not dare to
think.

"Spirit," he said, "this is a fearful
place. In leaving it I shall not leave
its lesson, trust me. Let us go!"

Still the ghost pointed with an un-
moved finger to the head.

"I understand you," Scrooge return-
ed, "and I would do it if I could. But
I have not the power, spirit. I have
not the power."

Again it seemed to look upon him.

"If there is any person in the town
who feels emotion caused by this
man's death," said Scrooge, "show that
person to me, spirit, I beseech you!"

The phantom spread its dark robe
before him for a moment like a wing,
and, withdrawing it, revealed a room
by daylight, where a mother and her
children were.

She was expecting some one and
with anxious eagerness, for she walk-
ed up and down the room, started at
every sound, looked out from the win-
dow, glanced at the clock, tried, but in
vain, to work with her needle and
could hardly bear the voices of the
children in their play.

At length the long expected knock
was heard. She hurried to the door
and met her husband, a man whose
face was careworn and depressed,
though he was young. There was a
remarkable expression in it now, a
kind of serious delight, of which he
felt ashamed and which he struggled to
repress.

He sat down to the dinner that had
been boarding for him by the fire, and
when she asked him faintly what
news, which was not until after a long
silence, he appeared embarrassed how
to answer.

"Is it good," she said, "or bad?" to
help him.

"Bad," he answered.

"We are quite ruined?"

"No. There is hope yet, Caroline."

"If he relents," she said, amazed,

"there is. Nothing is past hope if such
a miracle has happened."

"He is past relenting," said her hus-
band. "He is dead."

She was a mild and patient creature
if her face spoke truth. But she was
thankful in her soul to hear it, and she
said so, with clasped hands. She pray-
ed forgiveness the next moment and
was sorry, but the first was the emo-
tion of her heart.

"What the half drunken woman
whom I told you of last night said to
me when I tried to see him and obtain
a week's delay, and what I thought
was a mere excuse to avoid me, turns
out to have been quite true. He was
not only ill, but dying then."

In Wishing You

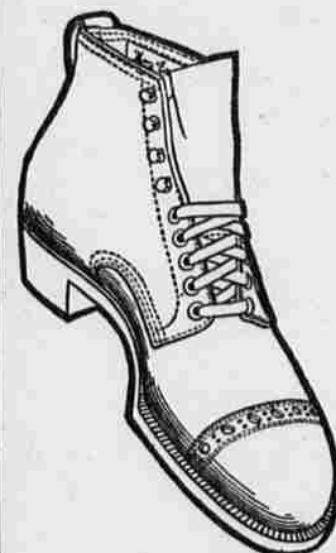
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Christmas**

**And Happy
New Year**

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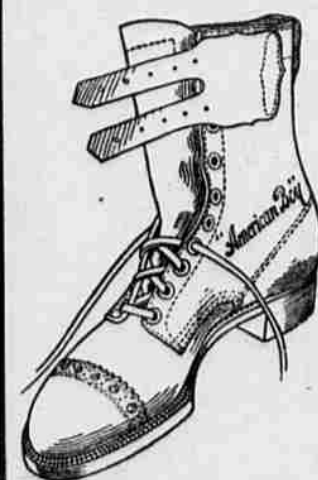
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